

with even the slightest tendency towards being pink. This will not be a consequence of the species being much less common in recent decades for it is still relatively common in south-east England.

Finding variation in *L. populi* minimal, it is surprising to discover it has some thirty named aberrations, including nine relating to colours such as purplish, rosy, very pink, ferruginous, foxy red, rufous, red-brown, red-yellow and flesh coloured and a frequent emphasis upon their fugitive nature. My specimen seems closest to ab. *roseotincta* Reuter, briefly described as 'Rosy tinted with the dark median fascia ferruginous) although 'ferruginous'; is hardly a satisfactory substitute for 'intensely pink'.— B. K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent DA5 2HN.

The Gold-tail moth *Euproctis similis* (Fuessly) (Lep.: Lymantriidae) variation in Kent

Barrett (1896. *The Lepidoptera of the British Islands* II. 297) commented on variation in *Euproctis similis*, noted that it was 'hardly variable but, rarely, a smoky black spot appears near the base at a short distance from the dorsal margin and one or two more near the apex or hind margin'. Thus, he was aware of ab. *trimaculata* Strand. Surprisingly, Chalmers-Hunt (1962. *The Butterflies and Moths of Kent*) makes no reference to variation in this species. On 12 August 2000 an example of this form visited my garden mv. light This is particularly noteworthy as *E. similis* is no longer a common insect in suburban gardens of north-west Kent. Barrett (*op. cit.*) considered it a most abundant species in the south and East of England while Chalmers-Hunt (*op. cit.*) described it as being 'frequent and found in all divisions [of the county]'. The brightly coloured caterpillars may well have been the first of any species I came across in the early 1920s at Bexley as a child, being common in the garden on fruit trees such as cherry, plum, apple and pear. Until the 1970s, the caterpillars remained common objects in the garden, and tumbled out in some quantity when beating for larvae from hawthorn hedges in Kent. It is at least forty years since I last encountered one of these caterpillars casually in my garden or elsewhere, and the moth comes sparingly to my garden mv light averaging less than one per year.

Another aberration to visit this light is ab. *nyctea* Grum Grshimailo, with an additional forewing black spot in the sub-basal area; one example was noted on 12 August 1966. A specimen of ab. *nigrostriata* Cockayne, a melanistic form with forewing black inter-neural streaks, also a male, was obtained in Orlestone woods, East Kent, on 24 August 1960.

It is interesting to find that two standard textbooks although purporting to illustrate normal specimens actually show uncommon aberrations. Edward Newman (1874. *An Illustrated Natural History of British Moths*) shows one specimen, a male, which is of the comparatively rare ab. *trimaculata*; I have not found it depicted elsewhere. Heath *et al* (1979. *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* 9) illustrate both sexes, that of the female possessing a pronounced tornal black spot, which is normally confined to the male. Thus it illustrates the female ab. *punctellata* Lempke.

In lighter vein I must recount that while referring to the various standard textbooks I noticed that the current one by Bernard Skinner referred to *E. similis* by a different vernacular name to that used by me in the title of this note. Why had he not used the familiar 'Gold-tail'? To my astonishment, South (1939. *The Moths of the British Isles*) also used the name 'yellow-tail', as does Edward Newman (1874. *An Illustrated Natural History of British Moths*). An exception is L. W. Newman and Leeds' book of 1913, which gives both names, with 'yellow-tail' the more prominent.

So, why had I used 'Gold-tail'? Further investigation showed me to be in-very good company – two eminent lepidopterists, Michael Chalmers-Hunt and Barry Goater evidently preferred 'Gold-tail', using it in their local works for Kent and Hampshire respectively. I presume the reason is that some other books on British moths current in the inter-war years used the more appropriate name 'Gold-tail'. — B. K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent DA5 2HN.

Hylaea fasciaria L., ab. *prasinaria* D. & S. (Lep.: Geometridae): the Barred Red

This being my first year running a trap in the garden of my new home in Suffolk, it is going to take a while to become accustomed to relevant frequency and scarcity of different species arriving at light. While getting used to the 'norm' of what I may expect to see in the area a few records have struck me as interesting in any context. One such has been the records of *Hylaea fasciana* L., the Barred Red, and the green aberration, *prasinaria* D.& S. coming to light. I have taken specimens of this ab. in the 1970s and 1980s in the Orlestone Forest, at Hamstreet in Kent, where it was regarded as a regular but scarce insect, and managed to breed it then. I have no recollection of the proportion of type to ab. *prasinaria* taken at light then at Hamstreet, but it was always a pleasant surprise to see.

Here in Suffolk in my first year I have seen just five *H. fasciaria*, but two were of the *prasinaria* form. This is a much higher proportion than I have encountered before. I am aware that this is too small a sample to use as a true guide as to the status of the green form here, but it will be interesting to see what happens in 2005. — DAVID WILSON, Lark Rise, Dunwich Road, Blythburgh, Suffolk IP19 9LT.

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The Great Fen Project – an appeal for records

Many readers in the Anglia television region will be aware of the Great Fen Project because of the publicity given to it in the local news programmes, for those who are not familiar with the project I quote the following from the first newsletter published in March 2004. "The Great Fen Project is an ambitious long-term restoration project designed to safeguard important wildlife habitats and species by restoring over 3000 hectares of wetland in the fen landscape of Huntingdonshire. In doing so it will